



STATE SENATOR BRENT STEELE

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B.E.S.

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SEN. STEELE: BILLS I SUPPORTED THIS SESSION

✓ **Gun Rights:** House Enrolled Act 1068 aims to keep the names, addresses and other identifying information of more than 300,000 Hoosiers with handgun licenses – also referred to as concealed carry permits – confidential, like tax records. House Enrolled Act 1065 prohibits most businesses from enacting policies that prevent licensed gun owners from keeping legal firearms in their locked vehicles out of sight.

✓ **Rx Abuse:** Lawmakers supported a bill aimed at combating prescription drug abuse in Indiana. Senate Enrolled Act 356 expands the data collected by Indiana's prescription monitoring program (IN-SPECT) and allows INSPECT to release information on prescribers and patients to the state toxicologist, Medicaid fraud investigators and substance abuse assistance programs. This change should help better identify problem prescribers and 'doctor shopper' patients in an effort to reduce prescription drug abuse.



✓ **SCHOOL FUNDING FLEXIBILITY:** House Enrolled Act 1367 provides schools the flexibility to claim money normally dedicated to capital projects and use it for instructional purposes. Schools agreeing to pay freezes for staff would be allowed to transfer more money. This measure will provide nearly \$82 million statewide to prevent school employee layoffs and help preserve instructional programs.



✓ **Utility Co-Ops:** Lawmakers passed a measure allowing rural telephone and electric cooperatives to merge into single co-ops. Supporters of Senate Enrolled Act 126 say merging co-ops could increase the utilities' management efficiencies and streamline efforts to more cost-effectively bring service to Hoosiers in rural communities.



SEN. BRENT STEELE

SERVING SENATE DISTRICT 44 TAXPAYERS



JOBS: LAWMAKERS FIGHT NEW SPENDING, NEW TAXES; PASS PRO-JOBS INITIATIVES TO HELP HOOSIERS

With little time and no money, lawmakers worked this short session to maintain Indiana's pro-job climate of low taxes and limited regulation.

Senators kept a close, careful eye on proposed legislation and amendments to avoid new state expenditures and government intervention that would have raised taxes and imposed red tape during already hard times for Indiana's workforce and employers.

Gov. Mitch Daniels, with the support of Senate Republicans, rightly reacted to tumbling state revenues by cutting government spending, flat-lining state payrolls and freezing all but essential hiring. To date, state bureaucracies have cut 20 percent from operating budgets. Reluctantly, higher education funding has been reduced 6 percent and public K-12 schools – nearly half of the state budget – have been asked to find 3 percent in new cost savings and efficiencies to help save classroom teachers' jobs.

Senators also successfully delayed \$400 million in new unemployment insurance premiums from going into effect in 2010. By

avoiding premium increases, lawmakers hope employers large and small will be in stronger positions to retain or add employees.

Lawmakers also passed initiatives to help Hoosiers recover from the national recession:

- **New Employer Tax Credits** will be offered to businesses re-

locating or incorporating in Indiana. Qualified businesses must hire 10 or more full-time employees, not including owners.

- **Small Business Tax Credits** will be expanded to make small employers with fewer than 35 workers eligible for Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) credits.

- **Small Business Ombudsman** will be an advocate for small employers with state agencies, helping navigate regulations, streamline paperwork and coordinate due

dates. Also, the ombudsman will monitor outdated, ineffective and overly burdensome reporting requests and red tape.

- **H.I.R.E.** (Helping Indiana Re-start Employment) initiative will offer tax incentives to employers who hire and train unemployed and underemployed Hoosiers.



AG ASSESSMENTS

Lawmakers approved a measure aimed at stabilizing Indiana's agricultural property assessment system that farmers say is currently unfair.

State figures show farmers are experiencing unanticipated "peaks and valleys" in farmland assessments based on an experimental formula crafted in 2006. Economists attribute the fluctuations in part to speculation about alternative energy sources like ethanol, bio-diesel, bio-mass and wind as well as economic corrections due to the national

recession, food and energy markets.

Senate Enrolled Act 396, supported by the Indiana Farm Bureau, will use an adjusted rolling average that eliminates the highest assessed value over a six-year period. Known by economists as the "Modified Olympic Average" technique, the model should provide farmers and local governments more stable agricultural property assessments and be more representative of true market value.

PROPERTY TAX CAPS

Hoosier voters in November's general election will determine if permanent caps on property tax rates will be added to Indiana's Constitution.

Lawmakers this session gave final approval to a resolution that would constitutionally cap property tax rates at 1 percent for owner-occupied homes, 2 percent for other residential and agricultural properties and 3 percent for businesses.

This action sets the stage to make these 1-2-3 caps part of

the constitution.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2007 property tax crisis, both chambers passed the property tax caps amendment in 2008.

Thanks to the 2010 approval, the amendment has now been passed by two separately-elected sessions of the General Assembly and can go before voters on Nov. 2.

Approval of this resolution proves lawmakers are once again siding with taxpayers and not tax spenders.